1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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from the Inamwanga and Iwa to the north-west and the Henga to the south. The affinities of the Inamwanga and Iwa appear to be with the Mambwe,[1] while the Henga are an offshoot of the Tumbuka-Kamanga people who took refuge from the Ngoni in Ngonde.[2] Of the Phoka who live high up in the hills south-west of Ngonde we know almost nothing, except that they are skilled cultivators, and their language is closely related to Tumbuka.

The cultural group consisting of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people, together with small groups in Rungwe district and Ngonde largely absorbed by them, and including the Nyakyusa immigrants in Mbeya district, probably numbers about a quarter of a million.

Of the more distant cultural affinities of this group we know nothing: there are no consistent similarities in culture between it and any other known group. The elaborate age-organization, and the great ceremony of handing over secular power to the next generation, which is held every thirty years or so, suggest East African connections, while the girls' puberty and marriage ceremony (*ubusungu*) is in many ways similar to the *cisungu* ceremony of the Bemba;[3] and the witchcraft beliefs are like those of the Azande[4] and the Lovale.[5]

b. Environment and economy

The Nyakyusa-Ngonde country is fertile, well watered and, to European eyes, spectacularly beautiful, with its arc of high mountains and sparkling lakes. The Nyakyusa valley forms part of the

[1] F. F. R. Boileau and L. A. Wallace, 'The Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XIII (1899); J. C. C. Coxhead, 'The Native Tribes of North-Eastern Rhodesia, their Laws and Customs', *Royal Anthropological Institute, Occasional Paper*, No. 5, 1914; C. Goldsbury and H. Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia* (1911).

[2] F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893), Vol. I, p. 52; M. Sanderson, 'Some Marriage Customs of the WaHenga, Nyasaland', *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. XXII (1922-3); T. Cullen Young, 'The WaHenga of North Nyasaland', *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. XXIII (1923-4); 'Tribal Intermixture in Northern Nyasaland', *J.R.A.I.*, Vol. LXIII (1933); 'Habits and Customs of the Olden Days among the Tumbuka-Kamanga People', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. X (1936).

[3] A. I. Richards, *Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 4. (1940).

[4] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937).

[5] C. M. N. White, 'Witchcraft, Divination and Magic among the Balovale Tribes', *Africa*, Vol. XVIII (1948), pp. 81-104.

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CHAPTER VII

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGE-VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

a. The peculiarity of Nyakyusa villages

621 561 171

VILLAGES in which contemporaries live together permanently have not been reported among any people in Africa other than the Nyakyusa; such villages are not found among their neighbours, and diligent inquiry from Africans of many tribes has not revealed them elsewhere; it is possible that the Nyakyusa system is unique, but we still know too little of Africa to be sure. A similar system might well exist elsewhere without having been noted by Europeans. The fact that Nyakyusa villages were organized on an age basis was not recorded either by the missionaries[1] or the Administration, though the system of Indirect Rule had been in operation for eight years before we began work in the district.

What is common in Africa is for groups of male contemporaries —age-sets—to live together in temporary villages or club houses before marriage. The warrior-villages of the Masai,[2] the regimental barracks of Zulu[3] and Swazi,[4] the cattle posts of Tswana[5] and Pedi,[6] are all occupied by groups of contemporaries; while among the Kikuyu[7] and the Kipisigis[8] local detachments of age-

[1] D. R. MacKenzie, *The Spirit-Ridden Konde*, speaks of 'small boys' living in 'tiny houses' of their own (pp. 27–8); J. T. Hamilton, *Twenty Years of Pioneer Missions in Nyasaland*, says: 'The elder boys live together in long oblong houses at the end of the village. When one of them marries he builds a house near the boys' quarter, and in this manner the village extends in this direction.' (p. 40.) He does not suggest any further separation of the generations.

[2] L. S. B. Leakey, 'Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *J.R.A.I.*, LX (1930), pp. 185–209; D. Storrs Fox, 'Further Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *J.R.A.I.*, LX (1930), pp. 447–65.

[3] E. J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, pp. 261–7.

[4] H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, pp. 117–37.

[5] I. Schapera, *Native Land Tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*, pp. 25, 220–9.

[6] G. M. Pitje, *Some Aspects of Male Education among the Pedi and Cognate Tribes*. (Thesis accepted for the M.A. degree in the University of South Africa. Unpublished.)

[7] W. S. and K. Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People*, p. 118.

[8] J. G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*, pp. 49–51.

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sets have club houses in which young men sleep. Among the Cewa, though boys do not move out of the parent village, they have a special hut in which they sleep together from the age of five or six.[1] But among all these people the age-set scatters at marriage, each young man building his permanent home, to which he brings his wife, alongside his kinsmen or, in the case of the Cewa, alongside his wife's kin.

The peculiarity of the Nyakyusa then consists in the fact that contemporaries live together permanently through life, not merely as bachelors: age-villages appear in an isolated area surrounded (so far as we know) by people with no similar institution.

We cannot hope to explain how, or when, age-villages developed among the Nyakyusa: there is no reference to them in such documents as exist, and we could trace no oral tradition regarding their origin. Even the historian Mwandesi (cf. p. vi) had no idea whether age-villages were introduced by the incoming Nyakyusa chiefs, or were found by them among the previous inhabitants of the valley, or were invented after the conquest. We can, however, inquire into the social characteristics associated with age-villages. *What are the peculiarities of Nyakyusa society not found in societies with kinship villages?* In this chapter we attempt to answer that question.

b. Age-villages and incest

The Nyakyusa themselves associate living in age-villages with decency in sex life—the separation of the sex activities of successive generations, and the avoidance of incest. When asked why small boys build apart from their parents they refer to the danger of a growing boy overhearing lewd talk between his parents, or seeing them unclothed (*vide supra*, p. 82); and they enlarge on the difficulties of father- and daughter-in-law avoidance were father and son to live in the same village—an avoidance which is consciously related to the fear of incest between father- and daughter-in-law (*vide supra*, p. 85). We may add also the fear of young men seducing their fathers' junior wives, who are often girls of their own age. Nyakyusa informants did not mention this last point as a reason for living in age-villages, but it is significant

[1] A. G. O. Hodgson, 'Notes on the Achewa and Angoni of the Dowa District of Nyasaland Protectorate', *J.R.A.I.*, LXIII (1933), p. 129.

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621 834 606 that adolescent sons are not permitted to visit their homes after dark, and when they come by day for their meals they are often required to eat in the open court-yard and not 'hide in the bananas or huts' lest they make love to their fathers' wives. They do not sit about in the men's village. Thus, although the villages of fathers and sons adjoin until the sons 'come out', the young men are physically separated from their young 'mothers'.

The feeling that sons should not be cognizant of the sex activities of parents, and that father-in-law and daughter-in-law should avoid one another is not, of course, peculiar to the Nyakyusa; all we seek to show is that the extreme elaboration of these avoidances among the Nyakyusa is dependent upon the existence of age-villages. Whereas a Pondo daughter-in-law must never [171] walk across the courtyard of the kinship village in which she lives, or approach the cattle byre or the men's side of her mother-in-law's hut, lest she come too near her father-in-law, yet, living in the same village, she necessarily sees him daily; the Nyakyusa daughter-in-law, living in a separate village, need not (and should not) set eyes on her father-in-law after her marriage. Where the territorial segregation of fathers and sons is blurred (as at Rungwe) there father- daughter-in-law avoidance is less strictly observed. The Nyakyusa regard this extreme form of avoidance as a peculiarity of their culture which has been imparted by them to the small groups (such as Ndali, Penja, and Nyika) whom they are assimilating.

Father- and daughter-in-law incest is clearly a potential danger in a society in which cattle are controlled by middle-aged and elderly men, who frequently have to choose between taking another wife themselves and giving cattle for a son's marriage, and who are accustomed to marrying young girls of an age suitable to be wives to their sons. But we cannot show that the danger is *greater* among the Nyakyusa than it is among other patrilineal cattle people such as the Pondo, Zulu, or Swazi, who do not find it necessary to segregate fathers- and daughters-in-law in different villages.

On the other hand the danger (common to all polygynous societies) of sons seducing their fathers' wives is exaggerated among the Nyakyusa by the absence of circumcision, the late 545 marriage age of men, the very early betrothal and marriage of 582 girls, the high degree of polygyny, and the practice of sons

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the group. In the few cases in which our informant may have been giving his own individual interpretation, 'putting a bucket down into his subconscious and pulling it up', it was at least a Nyakyusa subconscious, and the interpretation is in terms of the culture. It is with common, not individual, symbols that we are concerned: what is offered in this book is a sociological, not a psychological, analysis.

Similarities between the symbolism of Nyakyusa rituals and the symbolism of dreams and neuroses in Western society will be obvious to readers. That preoccupation with anal and oral functions, with 'nakedness' (though the Nyakyusa habitually wore the most exiguous of coverings), with death, coition, and birth, with mastery ('overstepping') and incest, which is characteristic of the rituals we describe, is evident also in any textbook of psychoanalysis dealing with Western Europeans and Americans; and certain symbols such as a house, a doorway, a spear, seed, and so forth are common to both cultures; but here we are not concerned to trace these similarities. Our business is to lay bare the symbolic pattern of the Nyakyusa without reference to the Western tradition.

The material used for the sociological analysis of ritual consists of two types: observation or description of events, and statements about associations. The greatest difficulty in presenting it has been to choose between a chronological account of each ritual, followed by the Nyakyusa translation or interpretation of the symbolism, and then by the sociological analysis; and an integrated account combining the interpretation and analysis with the description. The advantage of the first method is that the validity of both interpretation and analysis can be more easily judged since the evidence on which it is based is fully set out; the disadvantage is that the description itself implies interpretation and analysis. The symbolism is often implicit in the description of events, and the separation of description from interpretation involves repetition; at the same time the classification of events and symbols is itself a form of analysis, and the separation of description from analysis tends to conceal this. The present study is a compromise between the two approaches. Where events and their symbolism are fairly straightforward, the interpretation accompanies the description; but where, as in the rituals of farewell to the dead, puberty and marriage, and abnormal birth, they are complicated, and the interpretation may well be questioned, accounts of the events are separated from detailed evidence on symbolism. Analysis is neces-

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those of very young children. 'He goes because it is his subject who has died: he is like the senior kinsman of the whole country, he rules all.' 'If a chief omits to go to a burial people say nothing, they know that he is always going to burials and they think that perhaps he has some urgent business. But if he constantly misses burials then people say that he has no affection for his people, that he does not come to bury them as is fit; and if a chief hears them saying this then he is ashamed.' Sometimes a chief who is busy will send a son to represent him. And he sends the drums to beat the lament. 'The drum *is* the chief . . . they cannot beat the drum before the chief has spoken.'

Besides the chief, the villagers, the relatives, and the drummers, there come also personal friends of the dead man from other villages and chiefdoms. And beyond all these there often come others who are attracted not so much by grief and sympathy, nor even by the obligation to express these feelings, but rather by the dancing, the crowds and the possibility of getting some meat to eat. Not all those who come stay the whole three or four days, while the relatives who live at a distance often do not arrive until the second or third day.

The Nyakyusa believe that in order to protect the living and avenge the dead it is most important to discover the cause of death. To do this they summon a doctor to perform an autopsy,[1] an operation fearful and repugnant, but felt to be necessary. The symptoms are interpreted in terms of witchcraft or sorcery, or other supposed causes of disease.

On the first, or early on the second, day after death, the burial takes place. The grave is dug in the swept and beaten earth that immediately surrounds the huts. The first spit of earth is always turned by the eldest son of the one who has died. At one burial we saw the young eldest son of a dead man being helped to do this. He was too small to manage a hoe by himself so he caught the handle near the blade while an older relative held it behind to steady it for him. The digging after the first spit is done by a skilled grave-digger, who may be a kinsman or not, with the help of others. The grave is ten or more feet deep with a cave at the bottom to one side. Some graves are oblong, some round or oval,

[1] This is certainly traditional, cf. D. Kerr-Cross, 'Crater Lakes North of Lake Nyasa', *The Geographical Journal*, V (1895), p. 119. The custom is also reported for the Nyamwanga. For a description of the autopsy, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 247–50.

643 764 764 572 571 763 764 [171]

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Kukwe

ritual is powerful. If you do not perform the ritual for your father or perhaps that of your wife then you won't be a person, your body comes to an end and you die, but you are present, you are still alive, you do not die when the body comes to an end, you take faeces as in the ritual. But when they bring millet and say: 'This is so-and-so's, and this so-and-so's' (naming him whose ritual you have omitted) and brew beer and drink it, then you die. 764 775

QUESTION: How do the dead appear to us?

ANSWER: They appear before our eyes at night. You dream and in the morning say: 'I was with the so-and-so's in the night, with the so-and-so's!

QUESTION: Where do you go (at death)?

ANSWER: When we die we go above. [177]

QUESTION: That's a new thing?

ANSWER: Yes, indeed, formerly we said we went below; our fathers and grandfathers said that. But we now say we go below to rot and stink only but since we look toward home when they bury us perhaps the heart (*indumbula*) goes above (*kumwanya*) and that is home. We have seen this in European times in books. No, I am not a Christian and I cannot read, I've just learnt this. . . .

KALUNDA (a doctor) AND MWAIJUMBA: The *ikipiki* medicine put into the beer and lees at 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' is the same medicine as that which we eat at the pumpkin-seed ritual. The *ikipiki* of the death ritual and the puberty ritual and the birth ritual is one and the same, but the medicine for twins is different. . . . There is one *ikipiki* used in all the three rituals—puberty, birth, and death—but to it is added another medicine which is different for each of the three. *Ikipiki* is our kinship, it is our blood (*ikipiki bo bukamu bwetu, lyo ilopa lyetu*); when my wife has borne a child and no one wipes its mouth with [85] the *ikipiki* it means it is not my child, it is just a bastard from the veld, it is no relative of mine but a stranger. In the puberty ritual it is [88] the same, we treat the girl with the *ikipiki* of her husband. She moves from our lineage, from that of her father, she is now a stranger, not their relative (*ikasama ukikolo kyetu, kabagwise, mundu leleno, aka nkamu gwabo*). When someone has died it is the same. We eat food together with the deceased, the shade, and his blood. It is like the Swahili custom of eating each other's blood to create kinship. It means: 'You were our [171] kinsman from afore-time, but now it is finished, you are a stranger.' But the medicine for the twin ritual is separate, it is quite different.

2. IN KUKWE COUNTRY

The Kukwe ritual of death differs in detail from that of Selya and MuNgonde, but it is performed with the same overt purpose: to drive away the dead from the bodies and dreams of the 764 184

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Ku Kue

775 764 shade (*jonyuka*)! That (which was buried) is just earth, the body has rotted, it is the shade that we care for.

QUESTION: And the necklace of banana bark?

764 MWASALEMBA: We sleep with them. In the morning we bathe again and throw them in the water. . . . Yes, indeed, some throw them away in the little hut. It is the shade, we perform the ritual and throw him away. . . . If we do not perform the ritual we do not sleep, then we pray in the banana grove and are startled.

QUESTION: Why the banana bark?

MWASALEMBA: It is with the banana that we perform the ritual: the plantain is what we steal and the sweet banana what we cut at home, and in the banana grove we pray.

When a man dies his wives sit in a row on a bark-cloth. It's at the shaving of the hair, the doctor shaves them on the bark-cloth. It's a new one because we say: 'You must throw away the bark-cloths which your husband who has died caught hold of, and wear other cloths.' So they sit on a new one.

QUESTION: What do they do with it?

MWASALEMBA: They throw it away on the litter.

QUESTION: Where?

MWASALEMBA: In the little hut. It means: 'Here we have mourned; let us throw away everything, let us wear others.' If a woman has died we men do not sit on the bark-cloth, but if I have died then my wife sits on the bark-cloth and throws away her old ones, and also when a son has died the mother throws away her old bark-cloths, but she does not sit on the bark-cloth! No! And she does not throw away her bark-cloth for the death of a small son, nor for a daughter, even though she be grown up. No! See, she is also a woman and wears a bark-cloth in front. But for a grown son a mother throws away her bark-cloths, saying: 'Because he was my child, I bore him, he sucked my breasts, so I throw away the bark-cloths.' Only for a grown son who has wives in his house does the mother throw away her bark-cloth, not for a bachelor.

764 QUESTION: The stones between the fingers?

775 MWASALEMBA: We throw him away. It is the shade.

QUESTION: Is the first intercourse after a death a ritual or not?

764 MWASALEMBA: No, it is not a ritual; we begin to have intercourse 768 when the ritual is finished. But among the Penja when someone has ● 171 died and the ritual has been performed and is finished, the husband takes a cow and gives it to the father of his wife, saying: 'I take the woman.' Then he has intercourse with her. But we do not, except in the case of twins.

833 QUESTION: And ordinary intercourse?

775 MWASALEMBA: The shade is together with the heart (*alisoje indumbula*); it is he who is roused and goes to a woman, it is he who stiffens

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

CHAPTER IV

THE RITUAL OF PUBERTY AND MARRIAGE

1. IN SELYA AND MUNGONDE

(a) *The events*

881 585 584 856 THE puberty ritual for girls among the Nyakyusa is fused with the marriage ritual. Girls are usually betrothed well before puberty and they may live with their 'husbands' for some time before they grow up, for the view of most Nyakyusa is that a girl should become accustomed to her husband gradually and that it is good for her to visit him from time to time, sweeping his house, cleaning the byre, drawing water and cooking for him, and learning the art of love-making with him and no one else. While she is still very immature it is insisted that he should only have intercourse with her *inter crura*, but when she is approaching puberty he often has full intercourse with her. No legal case can be brought against him in court if he does so, provided that he has not forced or frightened her, but his friends may tell him he is foolish, and is 'teaching his wife adultery', since now he can have no proof, in the physical examination at puberty, that she has not slept with other men. No stigma attaches to the girl; if it is her husband who has deflowered her she is acclaimed in the ritual as a virgin. In some pagan families, however, notably those of chiefs, girls are not allowed to visit their husbands before puberty. The girl's father has the right to [171] refuse it, for before the ritual a wife is only 'borrowed'. Unlike the neighbouring Bemba, the Nyakyusa are not anxious lest the girl should conceive before her first menstruation—if she should do so the ritual is performed in the ordinary way—but many fathers dislike letting their daughters go before the main bulk of the marriage cattle have been handed over. Opposition on the part of the missions and the Administration to early marriage also influences the more sophisticated. The period of betrothal is long, for pagan [145] girls are commonly engaged from about 8 years old onwards, and the average age of puberty appears to be between 15 and 16.[2]

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Kukwe

Record of M. W., 13 September 1936

881 789 I arrived at nine o'clock in the morning to find Syungu, the elderly wife of the chief's senior brother, who acts as officiant in all the rituals for the chief's family, grinding and cooking *inyemba* together with a powdered medicine and red pigment, to make an ointment. I asked the purpose of the medicine. She replied: 'It's *ikipiki* that she may be heavy, that she may bear children and not be barren.'

273 789 Some of the chief's wives gave me beer—ordinary beer. They themselves were drinking from a pot which had stood in the inner part of the house (*kasefo*) and to which medicine had been added. They explained that it might be drunk only by themselves, the chief's wives. A strange woman, a Penja, came along and, though warned that this pot was not for her, insisted on drinking some of it. She explained how Penja ritual differed from that of the Kukwe—they kill sheep for the puberty ritual. Usually this beer stands to brew in the seclusion hut 'on the litter'.

881 The women were preparing a dish of beans and bananas cooked together, and when it was ready a little was given to the officiant, some was put aside for the girl (*usungu*),[1] and the remains were offered to the guests. One of the cooks threw away the central stem of the head of bananas used, but was told by the officiant to fetch it back, as all the rubbish must be cleared away together at the end of the rite.

After midday the officiant shaved some hair from the girl's temples and the back of her neck, and then she shaved the mother completely. I asked why the girl was not shaved completely and was told: 'Her fellows would laugh at her if she had no hair.' The officiant prepared four banana leaves, stripping each off on one side of the mid-rib and shredding the other half so as to make a rough fringe. Standing with her back to the girl, she touched herself over the genitals, breasts, and forehead, then handed the leaf back over her head, telling the girl to fasten it round her waist. She repeated the performance with the second leaf, telling the girl to fasten it round her neck. The girl complied with the first leaf but refused the second, saying: 'I have a cloth,' and she pulled her breast cloth round her shoulders. The officiant followed the same procedure with the girl's mother, who fastened both leaves round herself. Then one of the chief's wives took the mother on her shoulders and carried her round the corner of the house. The bride followed on foot, and three other wives of the chief, singing:

Kyanala
Kyatika
Kyanalaw
Kyatika

[1] Usually we have translated *usungu* by 'bride', but in this case she was not betrothed: cf. footnote 2, p. 73.

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Traditionally,
844 no man entered the confinement hut in which a woman remained
[177] until the cord had dropped off the new-born child and she had purified herself, and she did not normally resume cooking for her husband for some weeks; but these taboos are less strictly observed than formerly, partly, our informants insisted, because the country has been pacified and men do not fear to die in battle if they neglect them.

The obvious interpretation here is that a man is felt to partake of the weakness of a menstruating or confined woman if he comes into association with her. 'His legs become swollen and painful and he is very tired'; 'strength leaves him'; 'he has no speed in running'; 'his belly aches and his body grows red'. . . . The picture is surely one of a *woman's* physical weakness: a man is identified with his wife during pregnancy, observing the taboos she observes, and during menstruation and confinement he must isolate himself as far as possible from her lest he share her weakness; but none of our informants make a connection between the weakness of the woman and the weakness of the man—the interpretation is ours. The Nyakyusa were obsessed with the idea of 'filth' emanating from menstruation and childbirth; indeed, the feeling that women, by reason of their physiology and the taboo on washing during menstruation, are dirty, is cited by men as one of the reasons for not eating with them or sitting to chat with them. Only in this limited sense is the conception of ritual impurity linked with social
● [171] status. Here the contrast with a Hindu society, in which states of
785 ritual impurity (basically very similar to those of the Nyakyusa) are linked with caste differences, is marked.[1]

842 The second general conception underlying the taboos of procreation is that of *ubunito*, heaviness, a condition associated with sexual intercourse, pregnancy, the python of witchcraft, and medicines.[2] A 'heavy' (*nito*) person is dangerous to an 'empty' (*kuswa*) one, hence women sleeping with their husbands, and pregnant women avoid mothers with infants and brides in seclusion, who are 'empty'; and the 'empty' are treated to prevent diarrhœa and give them weight. Diarrhœa and 'emptiness' are closely associated.

842 The great specific against 'emptiness' is *ikipiki* medicine, used
789 in the puberty, birth, and death rituals, and even used to protect cattle against a menstruating woman. 'If a woman is the only wife

[1] cf. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952).
[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 95.

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behind the huts, moving inside after delivery, on to a litter of banana leaves spread for her. Her mother-in-law attends her and treats her and the new-born child with *ikipiki* medicine. She washes them in a basin made of two banana leaves, one sweet banana, one plantain, and is particularly careful to wash the infant's mouth and the mother's vagina. Powdered *ikipiki* is sprinkled in the water in the form of a cross. This is done 'that the mother and child should not have diarrhœa'. The cross is a symbol of overstepping (*kokukilyana kuno*, *kokukilanya kuno*, demonstrating a cross) and is made 'because heavy ones, those who are with their husbands on the bed, will come and overstep the mother and child if they are not treated'. Mother and child are also given a roasted banana with powdered *ikipiki* sprinkled on it. In bringing the *ikipiki* the husband's mother acknowledges the legitimacy of the child. 'If someone does not give a child *ikipiki* it is a bastard. It is as if the husband said: "Why do you insult your husband by committing adultery with others? Others have created this foetus; it is not mine!" '

The cord is tied with a shred of bark-cloth and then cut with a bamboo knife. 'An iron knife is taboo, it's a spear, other children will die from the spear disease (*ulukwege*); to use a spear is like killing someone.' The after-birth is buried in the banana plantation with a piece of the cord sticking up, and later the litter is burnt at the same place. 'Only officiants (*abasyage*) eat of these bananas growing over the burying place—no young person may do so for it's the banana grove of the litter.' The cord must be buried upright or 'the mother will not bear again'.

A delayed delivery is most commonly attributed to the woman's adultery,[1] and she is pressed by the midwife to confess the name of her lover or lovers, but it is also believed that it may be due to *imindu*, that is the shades. The husband consults a diviner who indicates whether the *imindu* is on his side or that of the woman's father and the one who is thus indicated should pray. 'Sometimes the woman herself tells of a quarrel which would lead to *imindu* and then her husband or father goes to pray.'

Mother and child remain in confinement until the navel cord drops off, sheltered from 'heavy ones', who should not enter or even greet the mother from the doorway, and from men, to whom both mother and child are dangerous. 'Men must not see a tiny

[1] Unlike certain other Central African peoples, the Nyakyusa do not attribute difficulty in childbirth to the adultery of the husband.

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spit' and 'to forgive'. *Ukuputa* means 'to blow out water' and *ukwiputa* (the reflexive form) means 'to pray', with the implication of confessing whatever anger or grudge a man may have in his heart. Full confessions both by the wrongdoer and by seniors who have been angry are held to be essential to the lifting of the misfortune.

The man who prays represents the living members of the lineage and he calls on his immediate seniors, who are dead, for support. 'You, Father, you my elder brother, you so-and-so (his grandfather) stand by me, help me, do not be angry, here I am, your child, your younger brother. I am above here, it was not I who killed you but Kyala alone.'

He may also remonstrate with the shades, asking why they should afflict the living. *Ukwikemesya* (lit. 'to cause oneself to blame', from the root *ukwikemêla* 'to scold' or 'to blame') is used to mean 'to sacrifice', and the conception of remonstrating with, or scolding, troublesome shades is an element of Nyakyusa sacrifice.

If beer has been prepared, a libation is poured out either on the hearth-bricks or in the banana grove nearest the door of the house, which is used by the owner as his sacred grove (*ikijinja kyake ikikemo*). If an animal is sacrified the blood must soak into the earth for, as already indicated, the 'earth is the shade's'. Furthermore, the rest of the beer or the fish and the *ija mmapa* meat from the foreleg of the beast[1] is left overnight on the ground in the sacred grove, more rarely under the officiant's bed, and eaten or drunk in the morning by young boys of the lineage, grandsons[2] of the last deceased, for they are 'the comrades of the shades'. Other people may finish up the beer or meat, but wives of the lineage may not touch it: they seclude themselves in their huts and remain silent during the ritual, for 'they fear their fathers-in-law (*bikutila abakamwana*)'.

The proper person to approach the shades is (among commoners) the senior member of a lineage of three generations; but if he lives at a considerable distance—perhaps twenty miles or more away—then a junior may pray on his own account, only asking help from his senior in cases of serious illness. 'If father and son, or brothers, live far apart, as here in Selya and at Mwaya

[171]

[1] The cut is the same as the Xhosa *intonyana* which is sacred in a Pondo sacrifice. cf. M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 249. Nyakyusa informants denied that the gall is of importance in their ritual as it is among the Nguni and Nuer.

[2] One case was recorded of a son of the last deceased, still a small child, drinking the sacrificial beer.

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neighbours give her gifts after her initiation it is that she may 'cease to avoid them', and a woman may give a small gift to her husband's father's sister, and thereafter look at her. Nowadays, a father-in-law, in exceptional cases, kills a bull for his daughter-in-law so that she may look at him.[1]

Great prestige attaches to generosity, particularly generosity with food. A chief or village headman is one who *feeds* people, and generosity is displayed both in informal feasts for neighbours and on the formal occasions of ritual. A father who is generous in the feasts provided for his daughter at her initiation and marriage gains prestige; if he is stingy his affines and his neighbours comment on it; he both loses their respect and fears lest he may even fall ill from 'the breath of men'. If the groom's family fail to provide sufficient, the bride's father does not hesitate to scold them for it, and they reply with humility which may be so exaggerated as to verge on boasting. It is conventional for the groom to plead poverty but at the same time he and his kin compete with the bride's family in preparing quantities of fine food. The pride and excitement over feasts is clearly brought out in the comments on funerals, the remarks of a mother on the return of her daughter to her husband after the birth of the first child, and Angombwike's account of marriage negotiations and gifts (pp. 31–4, 148, 253–5). The principals in any ritual are the centre of attention and may gain prestige from its performance, as a bride does, but what concerns the Nyakyusa much more is the reputation of the family serving the feast. Here the emphasis is very different from what it is in the Pondo ritual for the initiation of diviners, or the Lunda rituals of misfortune.

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

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We interpret the induction, seclusion, and bringing out as symbols of death and rebirth. There can be no doubt that the induction and seclusion represent death. Strewing leaves—or laying a litter—which is an essential act in every induction is a sign of misfortune and death;[1] and at the induction of a bride her 'mothers' sing: 'Go, go and never return', and 'We wail a dirge'. The mourners, the nubile girl, the mother of a new-born child, and the parents of twins are all 'filthy' and one with the dead; Kasitile said of mourners: 'We have died, we *are* the corpse.' The period of seclusion implies a sojourn with the shades, and our hypothesis is that it represents *both* death and gestation. The hut appears as a symbol of the womb in the pregnancy and 'gasping cough' rituals, and the doorway which 'belongs to the shades' is a symbol for the vagina. In the pregnancy ritual, passing through the doorway is explicitly interpreted as a symbol of birth, and in the death ritual mourners come out of the doorway stooping, and bump their heads against an obstruction. In the 'bringing out' in the death and puberty rituals, the mourners and the nubile girl run in and out of the doorway and water drops from the thatch. Kakune, the doctor, interpreted this as a symbol of the mourners' receiving the shade back on to their bodies. We interpret it, rather more widely, as a symbol of rebirth. Both men and spirit are reborn, the shade in the bodies of the participants.

All through the rituals the connection of the shades with potency and fertility is emphasized. They cause menstruation and sexual desire; they are present in intercourse and ejected as semen; they control conception; they control fertility in the fields. 'The shade and the semen are brothers.'[2] 'When they shake the millet and pumpkin-seeds (after ritual connection) the seed is semen . . . and it is the shade. . . .' The symbols of male and female, plantain and sweet banana, recur repeatedly. The wearing of them is explicitly interpreted as a symbol of fertility, and laying them together under the litter is perhaps a symbol of the marriage union, like eating the banana with *ikipiki* medicine. Intercourse between husband and wife is the culmination of the rituals of death, puberty, and twin birth, and is held to be essential to the health of

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 232.

[2] cf. Bhaca, *idlozi*: shade, semen (W. D. Hammond-Tooke, *A General Ethnographic Survey of the amaBhaca*. Unpublished thesis presented for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of Cape Town); Xhosa, *idlozi*: semen virile (A. Kropf, *Kaffir-English Dictionary*); Zulu, *idlozi*: departed spirit (C. M. Doke and Vilikazi, *A Dictionary of the Zulu Language*).

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783 The Nyakyusa perhaps emphasize it[1] more than their neighbours
●[17] (though not more than the Jews or the Hindus), and their pre-
occupation with purification in the rituals is paralleled by the
emphasis laid on cleanliness (*ubwifyusi*) in person, in house and
courtyard, in cooking, and in disposal of excrement. Their ex-
treme cleanliness, in contrast with their neighbours, was remarked
upon by all the early travellers in the area and is still obvious.[1]
Houses and courtyards are swept and garnished; pots and dishes
scoured, food scrupulously covered with fresh banana leaves when
it is served at feasts; a good housewife is *umwifyusi*, she who is
clean. Men wash daily in running water and children are trained
to take a hoe with them when they go to defaecate, and to bury
the faeces.

783 The horror of 'filth' is very closely associated with the fear of
158 madness, which is at the same time a fear of too close association
828 with the dead. It is when the dead have not been driven away, but
return in dreams; when the necessary separation of living and
dead has not been achieved, that men go mad. Madness is most
often spoken of as the penalty for neglect of the death ritual, but
it is not, in theory, confined to that: 'All the rituals are the same,
if they are neglected, men will become mad.' Besides madness,
men fear sterility, debility, swollen limbs ('an unhealthy fatness')
and diarrhœa 'to get rid of the filth in the belly' if the rituals are
neglected, or taboos broken.

796 That a common symbolic pattern expressing common senti-
ments recurs in all the rituals is clear, but it is also true that each
ritual is characterized by peculiar sentiments and symbols. The
funeral rites are first and foremost an expression of grief—kinsmen
and neighbours gather to weep for the dead. Their grief is sym-
bolized by the stylized wailing, the passionate dancing, the smear-
ing with mud and ash, wearing mourning belts, and the song of fare-
well at the hearth. It is true that, in the later stages of the funeral,
friends seek to comfort the chief mourners with cheerful songs and
dances, and in one aspect the funeral ritual is an assertion of life,
but grief not joy is its dominant note. By contrast, the ritual of
puberty and marriage is a rejoicing—rejoicing 'because our child
has grown up', because she is virgin, because there is feasting,
because there is a marriage.

881 Elements peculiar to the puberty ritual are the celebration of
virginity by killing a bull, and the prayer for blessing when its

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 77–8.

1 [i.e., the conception of impurity associated with
physiological functions.— Analyst]

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Yet still she remains a daughter of her father's lineage and shares in its rituals as well as in those of her husband's.

Lineages are linked by marriage and kinship between them is established by the passage of cattle. The son-in-law becomes 'one blood' with his parents-in-law when they drink the beer brewed or eat the chicken killed at the consummation of the marriage; some of his semen is buried in his father-in-law's grove, and his spear is placed in his father-in-law's hut. The significance of the link is magnified by the thicket of taboos which surrounds 'mixing bloods', and once forged the link should be, and commonly is, retained long after the deaths of the individuals by whom it was created, for each is replaced, the husband by a brother or son, the wife by a sister or brother's daughter. For each heir the ritual of 'mixing bloods' is performed afresh reminding them of their separation and union.

Cattle are closely identified with men and therefore with lineages. The shades watch over them. Like men, they are in danger from women who are ritually impure; at the death of their owner they, too, mourn; and kinship relationships are established and expressed by their transfer from one lineage to another. 'Kinship is cattle.'

The distinction and opposition of lineages is apparent in the ritual of puberty and marriage which expresses both hostility and conciliation. The two lineages dance in rivalry, haggle over cattle, and exchange feasts. Among the Nyakyusa, the opposition is not between men and women, as suggested by some recent writers on rituals elsewhere,[1] but between lineages; though the men and the women, both of the groom's party and the bride's, act separately. The hostility and conciliation reach their culmination in the ritual of vituperation among the Lugulu, when groom's group and bride's insult each other by word and in action and then, at the instance of the master of ceremonies, praise each other and feast together.

Among the Nyakyusa there is no clan organization and no common name for a lineage of many generations like the Pondo *isiduko*, which identifies agnatic kinship within a large group. A common name is used by members of a lineage of three or four generations at the most, and among commoners there is no invocation of a distant ancestor as among the Pondo. The hero

[1] E. Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*; M. Gluckman, 'The Role of the Sexes in Wiko Circumcision Ceremonies', in *Social Structure*, edited by M. Fortes (1949).

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613 referred to is not necessarily an ancestor of those who speak of him. In the rituals the participants look towards the direction from which their ancestors came, and the details vary both with the cultural area and with the particular lineage, but similarity in ritual observance is no ground for claiming kinship. The one recognized bond is common participation—attending one another's funerals and observing the rules of avoidance.

The segmentation of lineages is by houses. Ties between full siblings are closer than those between half-siblings and this is immediately apparent in the attendance at, and participation in rituals, as the genealogy of Mwakobela (Table (a)) shows. Full siblings, particularly successive and linked siblings, are closely identified. The most important link between men or women is inheritance. The heir takes the name and social position of the deceased, succeeding to his or her rights and obligations, and observing the same avoidances. 'A shade is resurrected in the body of his child.' The heir is a junior[1] man or woman of the lineage, preferably a full brother or sister, but possibly a half-brother or sister, or parallel cousin, or a son, or brother's son, or brother's daughter.

613 When the heir is a son, or brother's son or daughter, the separa-
601 tion so strictly maintained between generations is bridged for that individual only; he or she changes generation and a man is treated by his former comrades as a 'father' and referred to by his wives as 'father-in-law', even though they are still his wives and live with him.

The identification of alternate generations is expressed in calling grandchildren ('the comrades of the shades') to eat the sacrificial meat or fish, or take the first sip of beer, as well as in the absence of taboos between affines of such alternate generations. A woman does *not* avoid her husband's grandfather. Thus, though the lineage is treated in some respects as a unit, one man (or woman) of it being able to replace another and override the distinction between
• [71] successive generations, the unity is not pushed as far as among many other peoples, such as the Pondo, where the form of behaviour appropriate to a father-in-law applies to *all* senior members of his lineage irrespective of generation.

613 Differences in status within the lineage are clearly shown in the
554 rituals. In their observance seniors precede juniors, men precede

[1] If there is no junior full brother, a senior full brother may inherit provided that he has not previously inherited from his father and so become 'father'.

1 [Category 116, facing p. 270. – Analyst]

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spread and the foods and altars traditional in them continue to be used: thus Nyakyusa Christians use wheaten bread and wine from the grape, whereas their pagan neighbours use bananas and millet beer, and their altar is a table set at the east end of a consecrated building, not the earth of a banana grove.

Nyakyusa ideas of physiology are those of a strongly patrilineal society, in marked contrast with those of the Bemba who are matrilineal:[1] to the Nyakyusa a woman is a 'bag' which the husband fills with his 'blood' and so creates a child, while the Bemba believe that 'blood' is passed through the woman, not the man. The taboos of pregnancy also have a patrilineal slant. A difficult labour is commonly attributed, among the Nyakyusa, to the wife's adultery, never to that of her husband, as among the Bemba.

Differences in ritual vary in general form with the differences in economy and structure, but there remains a relative autonomy between them. Not only do symbols spread beyond the economy within which they were coined but, as we showed earlier, poetic licence exists, and the particular associations made by priest and poet are not predictable. Ritual idioms are linked to language, but how closely we do not know. What evidence there is from Bantu Africa suggests a similarity in symbols over a wide area, connected with the similarity in language, but such a hypothesis has yet to be established.

Secondly, the expression of sentiments reaffirms them. Treating food, and reproduction, and family relationships, and the community as sacred, expresses the importance of these things to the group concerned, and at the same time breeds respect for them. Treating them as important in ritual makes people feel that they are important. In Whitehead's phrase, 'the object of symbolism is the enhancement of the importance of what is symbolized'.[2] Rituals are also cathartic in that they express and explicitly reject anti-social attitudes, such as anger, terror, and the wish for death.

Thirdly, the general attitudes expressed in Nyakyusa rituals are necessary to the continuance of any society; they are conditions of social living; and the particular attitudes are necessary to the maintenance of the particular Nyakyusa structure.

Every society, if it is to survive, must value fertility in some

[1] A. I. Richards, 'Some types of family structure amongst the Central Bantu' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, edited by Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, p. 207; 'Mother-right among the Central Bantu' in *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*, edited by Evans-Pritchard, Firth, Malinowski, Schapera, p. 276.

[2] A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effects* (1923), p. 74.

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Farewell to Mwampiki 2/4/37

764 184 Women began to wail about 9 a.m. I saw some arrive with bananas. They stopped wailing after ten minutes or so. Imilanwa (Mwaisalwa) was present. Mwaijumba had not yet come. I met Kakuju on the way. He had not yet been told of the ritual. Mbapa and Maleja (widows of Mwalingo) did most of the work, with Ijumba, widow of Mwampiki. Isalwa sat near and watched while Maleja ground up the ointment. Seeds for making ointment were put on the fire. This was the ointment for anointing oneself in the ritual. Beans were brought in a flat basket. 'We mourn', they said, 'with bean mash and the meat of a cow.'

There was some discussion about killing the cow and a dispute between Imilanwa and Simeni. Just as the cow was about to be killed a woman came and made them bring it to the side of the swept court [262] away from the graves. 'If you kill it near the father-in-law's grave the wives will fear to eat the meat.' The cow was killed by Imilanwa. He then called the men of the family to discuss whether or not they should kill a bull also. One had been sent by the Chief Mwaipopo who is 'our son-in-law. He married a daughter of Maleja'. Imilanwa said: 'Let us kill it,' and they agreed. Only thirteen men were present so far.

[171 177] The meat from the fork of the right foreleg (*ija mmapa*) was taken to eat with the mash. This is a Sangu not a Nyakyusa custom. The men of the family follow the Sangu custom. The women, daughters of Sangu, do likewise, and the women who are wives of Sangu, but the children of daughters who are married to Nyakyusa men from Selya do the Selya custom. If the daughter of a Sangu marries a Selya man then, if her father dies, she does the Sangu ritual at his place, but if her husband dies she does the Selya ritual at his place even if she has borne him no children, and even if she is herself a child or an infant who has not yet been to him. But her children always do the Selya ritual both at their father's home and at their mother's.

The burying of the banana flower and rubbing in earth is a Selya custom and is only done by the children of Selya men. I saw five or six children do it. Then more children came to rub in earth. One was under instruction at the mission. The women told him to rub himself but Mwaijumba broke in: 'If he is a Christian he ought not to perform the ritual.' 'He's under instruction.' 'Very well, he does not perform the ritual, for a Christian should not have two gods (*ba Kyala babili*).' The bull was killed a little way off among the bananas. Mwaijumba explained: 'It is just for meat, it's not for the ritual, the further off one. Christians will eat it.'

Shaving of the sprouting hair *Record of Mwaikambo, 22/4/37*

First the men and women began drinking beer separately. Then they began the ritual. They went to the grave with beer in a small calabash.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

My wife and I were engaged in researches among the Nyakyusa from September 1934 to January 1938; and our informants constantly told us of the general similarity between their own customs and those of the Ngonde plain. They made it clear, however, that while they and the men of the Ngonde plain shared an otherwise almost identical culture they yet differed markedly in their political systems. The Nyakyusa, when the Europeans reached them, were organized in small independent chiefdoms, the people of Ngonde possessed a paramount chief, the Kyungu. More recently, among the Nyakyusa, a sustained attempt by the Tanganyika Administration to set up two paramount chiefs had failed; in Ngonde, on the other hand, where the Kyungu's supremacy had, until recently, been officially unrecognized by the Nyasaland Administration, his position seemed to be quite secure. The contrast was an interesting one and demanded investigation. Nor was this the only difference between the Nyakyusa political system and that of Ngonde; besides a paramount chief Ngonde possessed a group of hereditary nobles (*amakambala*) which was apparently quite unparalleled among the Nyakyusa.

So in July 1937 we crossed the Songwe and spent some time in Ngonde studying these differences. Our visit confirmed the fact that the traditional culture and social system of the Ngonde plain was in almost all respects identical with that of the Nyakyusa. The patrilineal kinship organization with marriage by cattle, the age-villages each with its great-commoner or headman (*ulifumu*), the little chiefdoms each consisting of a group of age-villages united under a hereditary chief (*umalafyale*), all were there.[1] The descriptions we were given of the traditional rituals at death, at girls' puberty, at the birth of twins and at the "coming out" of young chiefs seemed to be identical in general significance and almost identical in detail with the rituals we knew among the Nyakyusa. Language also was similar, though here the similarity had been less close in former times. And yet there were the two great differences: at the apex of the political system of Ngonde was the Kyungu, while a group of hereditary nobles formed an integral part of it. Again and again our informants confirmed this general identity, these specific differences: "Everything is just the same among us as among the Nyakyusa, only in the case of the Kyungu and his nobles (*amakambala*) is there any dissimilarity." How then was this dissimilarity to be accounted for?

[1] This social system is discussed in the first paper of this series—*The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa* (1938), and also in papers contributed to *Bantu Studies*, one in September 1936—"An Introduction to Nyakyusa Society," another in April 1939—"Nyakyusa Burial Conventions."

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE peoples with whom this book is concerned, the Nyakyusa and the Ngonde, occupy an area shut in by mountains at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, and enjoy a culture which, though varying locally, clearly springs from a common basis and is traditionally attributed to similar origins. The most conspicuous features of their political organization are (i) the balance of power between chiefs and commoners; (ii) the 'coming out' ritual in which a generation of men which has governed for approximately thirty years retires and hands over the administration to its sons, retaining only ritual functions; and (iii) the system of age-villages.

All are agreed that chiefs and commoners belong to different stocks; the commoners being descended from the original occupants of the country while the chiefs trace their descent to a line of invaders who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight generations ago. According to the myth, they brought with them fire, and cattle, and iron tools, and they found a people who ate their food raw in a land 'without trees'.[1] Commoners are *abatitu*, black people, while Ngulube, an early ancestor of the chiefs, was 'pale'[2] and chiefs (*abanyafyale*) generally are said to have been lighter in colour and 'different in their bodies'. After generations of intermarriage between chiefs and commoners there is no consistent difference in physical type between them, but the range of physical type among the Nyakyusa as a whole is wide.[3]

Nyakyusa and Ngonde historians say that their chiefs are related to those of the Kinga, who live high above the Nyakyusa valley to the east in the Livingstone mountains, whence the chiefs came. The Kinga acknowledge the connexion and join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to their common heroes, but culturally the

[1] Possibly the lake-shore plain. The hills until cultivated are covered with either savannah or rain forest.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, p. 10 (1939). According to the Ngonde version Ngulube was the *first* ancestor.

[3] cf. F. Fülleborn, *Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Nord-Nyassaländer* (1906). *Das Deutsche Njassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet Atlas* (1906).

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two peoples are distinct. Their languages are not mutually intelligible and the Nyakyusa despise the Kinga as dirty in habit and obsequious in manner. There were two main invasions from BuKinga: (i) that of the 'sons of Lwembe' who settled south and east of Tukuyu, and (ii) that of the 'sons of Ngomale' (or Kukwe), who settled first at Kina below the northern crater of Rungwe volcano, and then at Kabale in the foothills to the south-east. Most of the present chiefs of the Nyakyusa belong to one or other of these two lineages, and the chiefs of Ngonde are claimed by both. The arrival of the chiefs of Lwembe's line may be fixed between 1560 and 1650, i.e. before the settlement at the Cape, but after the death of the first Christian martyr in what is now Rhodesia[1] and the 'sons of Ngomale' followed them some generations later (*vide infra*, genealogies pp. 3, 27; p. 94). Two of the invading heroes, Lwembe and Kyungu, became 'divine kings' whose successors claimed spiritual authority over wide areas, and the heirs of Kyungu gradually acquired temporal power also.

About the first inhabitants of the Nyakyusa valley, the *abilema*, tradition is vague; however, it is clear that they were not one people, but consisted of small, scattered, independent groups, disparate in origin. Some were very early invaders from BuKinga, others came from near Lake Rukwa and were kin to the Bungu of the Rukwa plain. They occupied an almost empty country (as their name indicates) but they found pygmy hunters[2] in the Rungwe forests. The invaders themselves were primarily hunters and honey-gatherers, though some, at least, of them began to cultivate millet, beans, and pumpkins. One group of early inhabitants, the Penja, which was pushed into the north-west corner of the valley, has remained relatively discrete, though for the most part they have fused with the conquerors.

It is clear that nowhere were the invaders allowed to establish themselves as tyrants since, though their descendants rule over the various chiefdoms, their authority is strictly limited by the headmen of the villages who are invariably of commoner stock. Moreover, while the most sacred persons in the country are, or before the coming of the Europeans were, 'divine kings', descendants of the original heroes, chosen by each generation to become their

[1] In 1561, cf. G. M. Theal, *Records of South-East Africa*, vol. ii, p. 126.

[2] The quality of relations with the Pygmies is summed up in the ironical name for them 'Where did you see me?' (*Unkumalagu?*) The tale is that they were very sensitive about their size and the first question on meeting a Nyakyusa was always: 'Where did you see me?' The only safe reply was: 'Far, far away!'

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177 found the administration of the poison ordeal, driving out people
648 alleged to be witches, and killing supposed sorcerers 'contrary to
796 natural justice'. Here the change is not in the celebration of a ritual but in the execution of 'justice' based on traditional religious beliefs.

797 The early missionaries were very important as employers of
177 labour and a market for produce; indeed at one time they were the *sole* source of western trade-goods among the Nyakyusa. For long they provided the only skilled medical attention. They were the source of new learning, teaching, from the start, reading and writing and new manual skills, and the link between learning and religion, so familiar in the history of Europe, is still strong. Therefore acceptance of Christianity *tended* to go along with acceptance of the new economic and political structure, but it was never identified with it. Already in the thirties a popular song contrasted Christians with Europeans, and African nationalism was finding expression in 'independent' Churches.

178 Secularism fits as well with the new economic and political
171 structure as Christianity, and it has been argued elsewhere that
648 one of the characteristics of the change from a small-scale, isolated, self-sufficient people to a large-scale society is increasing secularism.[1] The evidence from BuNyakyusa does not so far support this, but there is a *separation* of religious and other activities. Religion is not interwoven with the modern political system as it was with the old. Traditionally the fusion between ritual and political activities was almost complete; village headmen became priests as they grew old, and chiefs became gods. Now there is a separation between Church and state, between Government and mission, which co-operate closely only in the organization of schools. It is true that Christian congregations pray regularly for 'those set in authority over us', but for the most part religious ritual does not enter into state functions. The flag is hoisted and saluted at sunrise and sunset at administrative and military centres; certain occasions, such as the Queen's birthday or the visit of the Queen's representative, the Governor, are celebrated with secular ceremonial. Only at the Coronation, to which African representatives from Rungwe district were sent, did the state ceremonial and the Christian ritual merge.[2] Political tension is not now directly

[1] R. Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, Chicago (1941); *A Village that Chose Progress*, Chicago (1950).

[2] 'The entire solemnity of the Coronation, from start to finish, is distinctly a religious rite.' Canon Charles Smyth, 'The Coronation Rite', *The Listener*, 18th May 1953.

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expressed or resolved in ritual. The place for *ukusoya*—speaking out—is the council chamber not the sacred grove or the homestead where the shades gather, and the reconciliation of conflicts between chiefs, or between chiefs and District Commissioner or chiefs and commoners, is sought in a committee rather than a Church. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in modern administration in Africa lies in this very separation of activities, in the *thinness* of the bonds across the colour line, in the cleavage between secular and sacred. Some separation of the different aspects of a society is a concomitant of the increase in scale—it is one manifestation of specialization—but it is greater in Tanganyika with its diversity of religious traditions than it is in Britain with its common Christian history.

That there is a connexion between the form of faith and ritual and the form of social structure few would deny. The concern of the anthropologist is to define it; to plot the limits of autonomy between different aspects within societies. This can be done only by the patient analysis and comparison of many societies and this book is offered as a humble contribution towards such a comparative study.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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all. Field boundaries have lost their earlier fluidity, when a plenty of land did not call for precise demarcation, and the only important changes now result from the land being left vacant or by the internal division of established holdings by inheritance or anticipatory inheritance.

In brief, then, the high premium given to land because of its modern scarcity value, and the enhanced authority of the headman in land affairs act together to preserve the individual's rights. The residual rights of the village, as group-owner of all land within the village boundary, do not affect the land-holder during his continued residence there.

The commonest type of dispute in land matters arises in inheritance, where a younger brother sues his senior in order to obtain or increase his share of the paternal holding (see page 21). That is to say, in general only where established holdings are being broken up does dispute arise and then, of course, only between the sons of the dead man. Disputes between neighbours in a village seldom are grave enough to be brought to court or even before the headman.

There are also many petty, semi-domestic cases which faithfully reflect the frequently poor relations between Nyakyusa husbands and wives in modern times.[1]

TABLE IV

NYAKYUSA LAND DISPUTES: CIVIL CASES, 1954

	No. of civil cases	Land cases No.	Land cases %	Population per land case	Density of population
Lake Plains	1,977	104	5	367	385
N.E. Highlands	965	24	2.5	1,842	199
Central Region	901	13	1.5	4,092	245
N.W. Highlands	1,280	8	0.6	7,300	201

Based on returns of civil cases in local courts of first instance ('B' Courts) for 1954. In 1955 the percentages were almost exactly the same as in 1954.

Several interesting points are suggested by these figures. Firstly, there is the larger proportion of land cases and the much smaller population per case in the Lake Plains, where land shortage is worst in relation to local demand, not only because of the higher density of population as such, but also because of the relatively larger acreages required for paddy cultivation. Secondly, in the Central Region of Nyakyusa country there is also a high density of population, but nevertheless only a few land cases; this may be attributed to the absence of cash-cropping and the absence, therefore, of a keen demand for land. On the other hand, the relatively numerous cases, or small population per case, in the north-eastern Highlands seem to result directly from a particularly densely populated area (Mwakaleli) where coffee cultivation is long established and the demand for land is exceptionally keen. In other words, as far as the figures for 1954 and 1955 show, there is a direct connection between land scarcity and the incidence of land disputes before the local courts (i.e. the more intractable disputes which go beyond the village headmen). General observation supports this conclusion. It may be expected in the future, therefore, that such cases will increase unless administrative action is taken to rationalise the inheritance laws with a view to minimising the area of potential disagreement amongst the sons of a deceased man.

For comparative interest, in so far as they offer some indication, I append here data on other Districts in the Territory where land disputes are common.

1. In 1954, 68 per cent. of all civil cases in the lower courts were marital disputes, including divorce suits, and there was one divorce case for every 24 adult males living in the country in that year.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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TABLE V

DISTRICTS IN TANGANYIKA WHERE LAND DISPUTES ARE COMMON

	No. of land cases	% of total land cases	Estimated population density	Population per land case
1953				
Rukwa District	1,189	23	69	333
Lushoto Division	149	12	188	1,013
Mbeya District	347	23	277	746
Ngara District	81	39	130	1,593

The Changing Village

The possibly unique age-village of the Nyakyusa is now undergoing considerable and fairly rapid change in response to the new conditions of land shortage. There is, firstly, an increasing *strength* of village exclusiveness and, secondly, there has been a breakdown in the essential age-basis of its organization. That is to say, that whilst the corporate unity of the village as an independent group has been strengthened, yet the social foundation of the village has simultaneously been changed and a different sort of village is emerging. It would take us far beyond the scope of this present essay if a full analysis of the changing village were to be made, nevertheless in so far as these changes are more or less directly the consequences of modern land shortage, land tenure and economic conditions some account is essential. Since the age-village was fundamental in the life and social organization of these people, the new emerging village is of crucial importance.

Land shortage has definitely exaggerated the unity and exclusiveness of the village in the Lake Plains at a time when, for other reasons, it was beginning to become a more open group. There was always, as we have seen, insistence on the principle that only a member of the village could hold and use village land; but village boundaries were often poorly marked and it was difficult to determine which headman, if any, had genuine jurisdiction over land relatively distant from the established village sites. Nor was it particularly important to be able to do so whilst land was plentiful. As paddy cultivation spread, men began seeking extra fields further and further away from home as land nearby was all taken up; and so long as they did not attempt to take land in the immediate vicinity of another village site there was seldom much difficulty in this. The attitudes born of a sufficiency of land persisted and headmen were not disposed to protest against outsiders who sought fields near the limits of their vaguely defined areas. Internecine warfare and raiding had, of course, been abolished as an expression of and a weapon in inter-village rivalries and animosities. With the establishment of general peace and security, and with increasing movement about the country between villages and chiefdoms, such rivalries and animosities began to die away. Many men came to live in the villages which they themselves had not helped to found; their *coevals* from their fathers' villages lived elsewhere, many of them widely scattered, and it was not possible to maintain a high degree of village patriotism, and, people began to feel, it was not especially necessary or important any longer.

It began to be possible for a man to hold some of his arable land within the area of another village, so long as members of the second village were not deprived of the opportunity of their own agricultural expansion should they desire it. This was especially the case when a large area of hitherto vacant (i.e. bush) but now valuable paddy land was contained within the approximate boundaries of a village. Outsiders were allowed to acquire fields on the strength of kinship with the headman or with one of the established villagers, or even by giving some small present to the headman (e.g. a little beer or some meat, etc.). Land was still plentiful then, or so it seemed to the Nyakyusa, and future shortages and difficulties were not perceived.

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Chagga FN4
Haya FN8

House-types of the Banyakyusa

By Aagaard Biegaard

During a stay in the Southern Highlands in Tanganyika in 1955, I was given the opportunity to inspect—and draw plans of—some of the houses belonging to the local Bantu tribe of the Nyakyusa. In literature they are known also under the name of Konde.

The district in which they live is fairly high above sea level and near the borders of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; the rainfall is fully adequate. Bananas and coffee are doing well—the banana trees often forming groves in between which you catch a glimpse of the village houses.

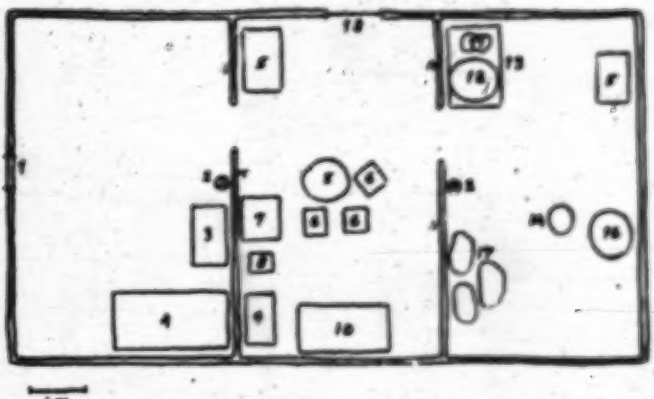
The district invites comparison with other localities in Tanganyika where the country is high, and where precipitation is plentiful. Such localities would be the districts around Kilimanjaro and near Bukoba to the west of Lake Victoria. In the former live the Chagga tribe, in the latter the tribe of the Haya. Even here bananas and coffee are plenty—and the I.Q. of both tribes is said to be high, as is the case of the Banyakyusa (plural of Nyakyusa).

Maybe you might therefore expect to find a corresponding standard of dwelling-houses, perhaps even the same type of hut. But in this matter you will be highly surprised; so great are the differences between the three areas. Apart from the original design of the house being round and the roof thatched, no similarity exists between the various houses or their interior lay-outs.

The round, thatched Chagga hut has its roof all way down to the ground. It is not very large and the interior lay-out is quite primitive. A cow or goat lives all its life indoors and is fed there. A short and uncomfortable bed is found near by. Down the centre of the floor is a stone-paved aisle. Everything looks quite simple—especially when you remember that in other aspects the Chagga are quite advanced in their use of modern facilities; for instance they use electricity for the grinding of their maize.

The Haya hut—the old, round type—is a really magnificent thing. I think its centre is seven or eight metres high. In front it has a kind of overhang, maybe you might call it a front room, where people will sit, and where guests will be received. If you are a welcome guest, a straw mat will be rolled out to cover the grass flooring of the hut. The walls of the front room are solid plates made from a kind of reed. The hearth is placed near the centre of the inner room.

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17 Nyakyusa



Baba's house. 1, barred window; 2, posts supporting roof; 3, wooden chest; 4, Baba's bed; 5, table; 6, chair; 7, cupboard; 8, chair with three suitcases; 9, suitcase; 10, table with bookshelf; 11, bag; 12, large basket, *ilimbo*; 13, low stand for 11 and 12; 14, millet jars; 15, low partitions; 16, *ikinde* in which the millet is washed; 17, rice in bags.

cupboard. This seemed very strange and a bit disorderly. On a chair were three suitcases on top of each other.

It was interesting to see, in the store-room, the very crops that belong to the man, viz. rice and millet, the most valuable produce. The rice was in bags, and it is quite probable that this man had bought it from the districts near Lake Nyasa, where it thrives well. On higher ground, rice cannot be cultivated.

The millet was contained in a basket, 1 m in height, 55 cm broad at the bottom, and narrower, 35 cm, at the top.

Further, there was a large, beautiful earthenware jar, which he had bought. This was intended for the millet. And there was also a cylindrical container for the washing of the millet when it was brought home from the field. This vessel was 55 cm in height and 85 cm across.

All three houses had a small window with bars or shutters.

The inside of the houses lay in semi-darkness, as the only light is admitted through the doorway, and in some cases through the diminutive barred window. Nevertheless, the interiors give a nice impression, because of their tidiness, height, size, and cleanness. And how cosy they are, when seen at night; the door is closed, you gather round the fire and delight in perfectly cooked rice, which is the favourite dish at this principal meal of the day.

Johnston says (1897, page 433) that the greater number of the houses are circular in their plan and very much like bee-hives in shape; their walls are wickerwork filled with mud cobs, and they have thatched roofs. He also reports

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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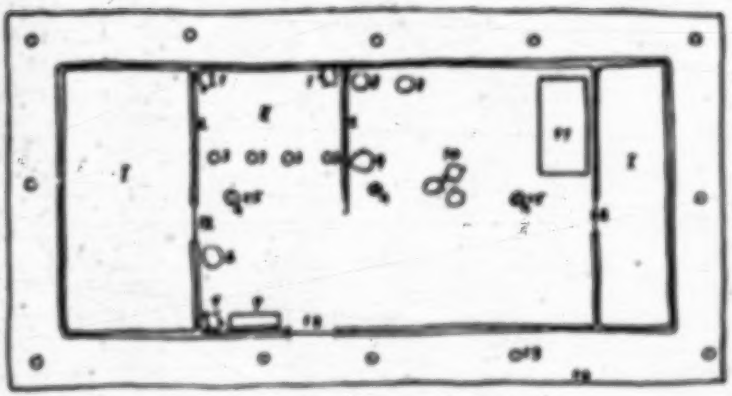

An dowa from the village of Kikota. I, store-rooms at either end of the house; II, corners for cattle;—1, hen's nest; 2, low partitions from bamboo; 3, posts for tying two head of cattle; 4, Three posts supporting roof; 5, bow bamboo cups, calabashes, etc. were hanging on the posts; 6, wooden mortar for maize; 7, roost from bamboo tied together; 8, water jar; 9, basket; 10, hearth consisting of two round and one square bowldstone; 11, bed of the woman; 12, door; 13, supports for the roof; 14, doors.—Outer doors from wooden boards; store-room doors from bamboo; bamboo ceiling covers area from half-way partition to the right of cow's corner on to store-room inner wall to the right.

[171] that such houses are found in Africa (a) south of the Zambezi, (b) in all of British Central Africa, (c) in all of East Africa including the Egyptian Sudan,—but not in localities where the Arab influence has introduced the oblong, rectangular building.

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197 Now, if we look upon the eastern territories of Africa only—what great changes have taken place there since Johnston's day? The round house is being ousted under foreign influence—Arab as well as European.

If you ask a native of Africa, why he changes the plan of his house, his answer will be, that the rectangular house is easier to sub-divide and better in use—which is most probably true. When first the technique has been adopted, people in other parts of Africa will no doubt abandon the circular design and take up the rectangular.

171 342 But nevertheless, the variations in types of hut in Tanganyika are truly amazing; they range from e.g. the *lisse dowa* of the Banyakyusa,—to the rectangular *dowa* with nearly flat, clay roof of the Vakinduo,—to the round bee-hives of the Batoro, which may be built in no time on a frame-work of branches and covered with

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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gram. This last-mentioned type is used by the Batutsi of western Tanganyika as temporary shelter on their perennial wanderings.

Why, then, do not all tribes build to the same design? There are 120 different tribes in Tanganyika alone, and were you to put the question to a member of one of these tribes, he would simply say, "We follow our custom!"—and this is actually the answer. It takes time to be influenced; people will stick to their old customs,—a fact which, as seen from an ethnographical point of view, is really an advantage. Changes should not come too quickly.

At about the time when Johnston wrote the above lines, the history of Johannesburg as a town had just begun. Now, that city is all grey stone cuboid and streets criss-crossing at right angles. Even if the gold was behind all that, you never know when a similar fate may befall some part of Tanganyika. What cannot be called forth by the diamonds to the south of Lake Victoria?

Were the African village to disappear entirely,—it would truly be missed. It is interesting to follow the development which is under way in Tanganyika, and which cannot be halted,—to see how it will influence the charming villages and their inhabitants.

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Andreas Baumann
Adresse
Strasse
Ort

14:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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but I was astonished that this trap was erected relatively near to my tent on the border of the village of Katumba.

6. Fishing. Fishing is a much more common practice with the Nyakyusa than hunting. The old-established custom of poisoning fish in their smaller rivers is still widely used. The poison is derived from the *unkeredu* shrub. Its branches and leaves are broken off, reduced to small pieces between stones and then packed in a covering of grass to resemble a long cigar about 1 meter in length and 25 cm in width. The bundles prepared in such a manner are fixed between two rowes of stones placed across the river for this purpose. The poison gradually diffuses into the water, which takes on a green colour. The fish are soon affected by the poison and rise to the surface with gaping mouths. They are then easily caught with a scoop made from bamboo. The open end of a piece of bamboo is split into several sections and the splinters are bent apart and tied together with raffia to form a sort of funnel[1]. The fish are strung through their gills on small pliable sticks and roasted at home over a fire. All people are allowed to join in this fishing which to them is always a festive occasion in the cooler season.

Fishing in broader and deeper rivers, such as the lower Kiwira, is done by means of large fish-traps. They are made and repaired by men on the banks of the river. The traps are attached to poles rammed into the bed and almost invariably boats trying to reach the Lake Nyassa get struck on submerged poles. These large fish-traps strung across the river form quite an impressive sight. Looking up-stream, they look like the bows of little ships standing in a row.

7. Preparing food. With the Nyakusa the preparation of food is so exclusively the task of the women, that R. Thurnwald is quite correct when says (Black and White in East Africa, London 1935, p. 137): "Menfolk starve if there are no women to prepare their meals". There is thus a very strong division of labour between the sexes, also noticable in the carrying of loads. For a young man to carry the load of an old woman or his sweetheart, whom perchance he might meet on the road, would be a grave violation of a rigid custom.

As the preparation of the food is the women's duty, also the grinding (*ukusiha*) of the corn in a mortar (*ikinuli*) with a pestle (*ikitiwe*) which is the exclusive task of the female sex. The wife is always the first to rise in the morning to prepare breakfast. Usually, however, this is not

[1] NB. They are of the same kind as those of the Hottentots along the Great Fish River in South West Africa.